

Mental Health Anti-Stigma Walkathon Development Guide

November 2005

Submitted to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) by National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) in fulfillment of contract number 05M00016. The views, opinions, and content in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of SAMHSA or DHHS.

Contents

I. General Information	1
Purpose of the Guide and Benefits of Walks	1
Timeline of Walk Activities.....	1
II. Walk Position Descriptions	4
Walk Coordinator.....	4
General Walk Team Chairperson.....	5
<i>Sample—Walk Committee Meeting Agenda</i>	8
III. Selecting a Walk Site and Date.....	10
IV. Volunteer Information Meeting.....	13
What is the Purpose of the Meeting?	13
How to Plan for the Meeting.....	13
<i>Sample—Volunteer Meeting Agenda</i>	14
<i>Sample—Thank You Letter, Initial Walk Meeting</i>	15
V. Walk Sponsorship	17
Who Should Be a Sponsor?	17
How Should I Start?.....	18
Creating a Sponsorship Request Folder	18
What About Other Sponsors?	18
<i>Sample—Sponsorship Confirmation Form</i>	19
<i>Sample—Sponsorship Opportunities Sheet</i>	20
<i>Sample—Sponsorship Request Letter</i>	22
VI. Team Building	23
Walk Team Chair Targeting Worksheet	25
Core Team Building Strategies	26
Recruiting and Developing Large Teams	27
Team T-Shirts Make a Team!	28
VII. Budgets.....	30
<i>Sample—Walkathon Budget</i>	30
VIII. Media Sponsorship.....	32
Why Get Media Sponsors?	32
IX. Team Captains’ Kickoff Luncheon	35
Planning Checklist	38
<i>Sample—“Thanks for Coming” Letter</i>	40
<i>Sample—“Sorry You Couldn’t Attend” Letter</i>	41
<i>Sample—Kickoff Luncheon Invitation</i>	42
X. Walk Day	43
Planning the Day of the Walk.....	43
Registration Information	48
Volunteer Needs.....	48
General Checklist of Needs	51
XI. Conclusion	55
XII. Resources.....	56

I. General Information

Purpose of the Guide and Benefits of Walks

Over the last 20 years, walkathons and other similar athletic events have become the number one vehicle for health-related groups to generate public awareness of and support for their causes. This guide will assist you in doing the same for the cause of mental health.

Walks are a tried and true way to mobilize interested individuals and organizations around an event that will generate greater public awareness and understanding of mental health. This understanding will in turn lead to a reduction in the stigma surrounding mental illnesses and persons living with the illnesses.

As you begin the process of planning a walkathon, you should develop a simple, one-page paper explaining who you are and why the walkathon is important to your community.

Timeline of Walk Activities

First Steps (5 to 10 Months Prior to Walk Date)

- Hold first organizational meeting.
- Identify and recruit general walk chair or co-chairs.
- Select date, location, and time of walk.
- Set up local walk headquarters or P.O. box.
- Begin process of recruiting sponsors for walk.
- Organize walk committee and begin holding meetings.
- Develop and begin to implement walk awareness and volunteer recruitment campaign within your local community.
- Try to target and recruit a top level business leader to serve as a corporate team recruitment chairperson.
- Try to recruit local media (radio, TV, newspaper) sponsors for the walk.
- Develop and begin using a Web site to publicize the walk and communicate regularly with confirmed and potential volunteers.

Next Steps (2 to 5 Months Prior to Walk Date)

- Finish recruitment of sponsors. Gather all sponsor names and logos needed for printed materials.
- Continue to hold committee meetings.
- Continue to expand committee and number of volunteers involved with the walk.
- Continue to make local organizations aware of the plans for the walk.
- Continue to work on walk day logistics.
- Continue to use the Web site to publicize walk and communicate with volunteers.
- Finalize public relations plans with walk media sponsors.
- Plan major kickoff luncheon for walk that will be held approximately 8 weeks prior to date of event.
- Finalize large mailing list of potential sponsors to invite to kickoff luncheon.
- Order all walk materials (posters, team building information packets, walkathon informational materials, etc.) needed for kickoff luncheon.
- Mail personalized letters of invitation to mailing list 5 weeks prior to kickoff luncheon.
- Mail followup formal invitation 1 week after the letters are mailed.

Final Pre-Walk Period (2 Months until Walk Date)

- Hold successful kickoff luncheon 8 weeks prior to date of walk.
- Send thank you letters to everyone who attended the kickoff luncheon.
- Send or deliver walk materials to all potential supporters who were unable to attend the kickoff luncheon.
- Communicate regularly about the walk with all team captains and sponsors via the walkathon Web site, mailings, e-mails, and phone calls.
- Track walker pre-registration forms by teams as they are received.
- Continue to hold walk committee meetings as needed.
- Finalize plans for walk day logistics.

- Implement walk public relations plan that was developed with media sponsors.
- HOLD SUCCESSFUL WALK!

Post-Walk Activities

- Hold final walk committee meeting.
- Send thank you report with results of the walk to all key supporters.

II. Walk Position Descriptions

Walk Coordinator

Reports to: Sponsoring Organization's President or Designee

Works With: Walk Chair(s) and Walk Committee Members

Major Responsibilities

- Coordinates the selection of the date, day, location, time, and distance of walk.
- Leads effort to recruit quality team chairs for the walk.
- Coordinates the recruitment of a volunteer planning committee for the walk.
- Coordinates, directs, and supports the activities of the walk committee.
- Oversees the coordination of all aspects of the implementation of the walkathon program, including:
 - Recruiting team chairs.
 - Organizing and managing a volunteer planning committee.
 - Coordinating all planning committee meetings and activities.
 - Recruiting, training, and maintaining a database for all team captains.
 - Ordering all print materials for the walk.
 - Recruiting local cash and in-kind sponsors for the walk.
 - Developing a timeline of activities for the walk.
 - Coordinating the team captains' kickoff luncheon that will be held approximately 8 weeks prior to the date of the walk.
 - Coordinating all mailings to potential and confirmed walk supporters and team captains prior to the walk.
 - All public relations relating to the walk
 - Developing community-, organization-, and business-based walk teams after the kickoff luncheon (i.e., helping team captains recruit and track walkers for their teams).
 - Maintaining complete walk records, specifically the teams and walkers that participate in it.

- Producing regular pre-walk progress report mailings to team captains between the day of the kickoff luncheon and the day of the walk.
- Coordination of all walk day activities.
- Completes a comprehensive post-walk income/expense report within 10 weeks of the walk.
- Handles all other walk-related duties as assigned by the sponsoring organization's president.

Task Assignments During 6- to 9-Month Period	Estimated Hours to Complete
Plan, facilitate, and attend walk committee planning meetings	30
Coordinate and communicate with walk team captains	100
Plan and attend kickoff luncheon	150
Coordinate the recruitment of sponsors and in-kind donations	50
Attend meetings with potential supporters	10
Plan, coordinate volunteers, and attend walk event	200
Total Time Required	540 Hours

General Walk Team Chairperson

WORKS WITH: Walk Coordinator and Members of the Walk Committee

Major Responsibilities

- Organizes a team of 20 or more walkers made up of family members and friends to take part in the event. Provide these walkers with team T-shirts.
- Allows letters encouraging other communities to organize a team of walkers to be sent in his/her name.
- Allows letters of invitation to an initial informational meeting to be sent to potential supporters in his/her name.
- Allows letters of invitation to the kickoff luncheon to be sent to potential supporters using the sponsoring organization's name.
- Attends the kickoff luncheon and speaks about why he/she is supporting the walk and the work being done by the sponsoring organization.

- Joins other volunteers in giving presentations on the walk to potential supporters of the event.
- Allows pre- and post-kickoff correspondence to be sent to team captains and other walk supporters in his/her name.
- Participates in the walk as a leading member of his/her community team.

Task Assignments During 6- to 9-Month Period	Estimated Hours to Complete
Attend walk committee planning meetings	6
Organize your own walk team	10
Attend kickoff luncheon	3
Correspond with your team	8
Attend meetings with potential supporters	5
Participate in the walk	3
Total Time Required	35 Hours

Finding a Walk Team Chair

The Walk Team Chair Must:

- Lead by example in terms of personal teambuilding efforts.
- Sponsor the “best team” (in terms of the number of walkers) participating in the walk. The walk team chair should be someone who is comfortable with minimum team goal of 25 walkers.
- Be passionate about the walk and have a personal vested interest. This helps in recruiting people to participate as members of their team.
- Commit him/herself to a letter writing/e-mailing campaign in support of the walk. He/she should encourage all team members to do the same.

Who Should Be Selected as a Walk Team Chair?

- The person has been personally touched in some way by mental illness and is strongly committed to the goals of the walkathon.
- The person may have a large family who will support his/her teambuilding efforts as a walk team chair.
- The person believes in the walkathon concept and is committed to leading by example in the teambuilding area.
- The person has a compelling personal story and communicates it effectively.

- The walk team chair does not necessarily have to be the person who is known by the most people or who has the most “contacts” in the community (although having a person or family who will have a good team and is well-known and respected in the community is a good thing).

Sample—Walk Committee Meeting Agenda

<<Meeting Date>>

Walk Planning Committee Meeting

1. Welcome (staff person and/or walk chair)
 - Committee List
2. Sponsorship
 - Goals and timeframe
 - Sponsors recruited to date
 - Status of outstanding requests
 - Targeting of new prospects
 - Available materials
3. Walk Teams
 - Team building
 - Goals
 - Confirmed and potential community teams
 - Confirmed and potential business and organization teams
 - Recruitment of new teams
 - Consumers and families
 - Mental health agencies and organizations
 - Mental health professionals
 - Hospitals and clinics
 - Other groups
4. Kickoff Luncheon
 - Overview of event and goals for it
 - Present plans for it (date, time, and location)
 - Planning timeline for it (invitation process and printing of materials)
 - Tentative agenda for luncheon
5. Publicity
 - Targeting and recruiting media sponsors and celebrity walk chairs
 - Public service announcements during weeks leading up to walk
 - Having celebrity chairs appear at kickoff luncheon and walk
6. Walk Day Logistics
 - Overview of the day and how the walk site and route will be set up

- Volunteer needs and recruitment (walker check-in tables, T-shirt distribution, refreshment area, etc.)
 - Food and refreshment needs
 - Entertainment
 - Stage, sound system, music
 - Balloons, signs, and more
 - Equipment needs (tables, chairs, portable toilets)
7. General Discussion
 8. Next meeting

III. Selecting a Walk Site and Date

The first step in holding a walk is selecting a site, date, and time for the event. If possible, this should be done before the initial volunteer meeting is held. If that isn't possible, it should be done as soon as possible after that meeting. The following items should be considered when planning a walk.

Selecting a Walk Site

- Don't try to reinvent the wheel by choosing a location that is unique. It is usually best to stay with proven sites that are used by other non-profits for their walkathons.
- Things you should look for when selecting a site include:
 - Is the site conveniently located for your strongest base of confirmed and likely supporters?
 - Is there good highway access to the site for people who might have to travel?
 - Is there plenty of parking if the turnout is large (1,000 or more walkers)?
 - Is there a nice, safe route that starts and ends at the same place?
 - Is the path paved so the walk is "wheel friendly" for wheelchairs, wagons, rollerblades, and scooters?
 - Does the site have experienced park officials who have worked on previous walkathons?
 - Is there access to electricity and restrooms?
 - Is there access to shelter (with doors that have locks) where you can do your walk day accounting or that you can use should the weather be bad the day of the walk?
- Almost every public park will require proof that your group has a \$1 million special event insurance policy that names the park as an "additional insured." Any park can be added to this policy through a simple one-page rider. These riders are issued once the walk site has been reserved. A copy of this rider is all that most (95 percent or more) parks will need to satisfy their insurance coverage requirements.
- Generally, walk routes are 5 to 10 kilometers (3.1 to 6.2 miles). It is strongly recommended that groups avoid having a walk that is shorter than 5K or longer than 10K. Walking a shorter 1–1.5 mile loop 2 or 3 times is fine if it is necessary to get the distance you want.
- Generally, you do not want to pay much more than the basic user's fee for a site. This means, for example, you don't want to hold your walk at a zoo with an "entry

charge” of \$4 to \$10 per walker. “Special locations” often times come with “special costs” and place severe limits on how a walk can be organized.

Remember, the site generally has little impact on the success of a walk. People generally don’t participate in walks because of where they are held; they participate because they want to support the cause.

- Large, open areas (paved or field) can serve as the start/end point for walk. This is where walkers can gather before the walk starts. The site should have enough room for a stage and tables and chairs for walker check-in, food/refreshments, and vendor/sponsor information.

Selecting a Walk Date/Day

- Be sensitive to holidays, including religious holidays. Holiday weekends are generally best avoided because of travel and other special activities (soccer tournaments, for example).
- Generally, there is little difference between holding a walk on a Saturday or a Sunday morning. Usually it’s best to let local volunteers pick the day if they have a preference.

Selecting a Walk Time

- Most walks are held in the morning with the check-in times ranging from 8 to 9 and the start times ranging from 9 to 10. A small percentage of communities prefer holding Sunday afternoon walks with a 1 p.m. check-in and 2 p.m. start.

One advantage to having a 9 a.m. check-in and a 10 a.m. start is that both the walkers and the volunteers setting up the walk site get to sleep in a little later. This extra hour can mean the difference between getting up at 4 a.m. or at 5 a.m. for the volunteers setting up the site. On the other hand, the argument for the 8 a.m. check-in and 9 a.m. start is that the walk and post-event clean-up will be over by noon and both the walkers and the volunteers have the rest of the day to do whatever they want to do.

- Check-in usually begins an hour before the walk starts. This is when the walkers turn-in their donations and gather with their teammates. Walkers also may have a light breakfast and take a team picture during this time. Be aware that “early bird” walkers may start arriving up to 30 minutes prior to the official start of the check-in period.
- Other activities that might take place during the check-in period include music being played by a DJ or a local radio station and periodic announcements over the sound system about check-in procedures, available refreshments, team photo opportunities, and the amount of time before the walk starts. Many walks include a formal 5–15 minute pre-walk program of speakers just before the start of the event. An aerobic

warm-up session before the start of a walk also is common. This helps to get everyone ready to walk.

- It is important that the start of the walk be as organized as possible. All the walkers should begin at the same time so there is a sense of unity and excitement. Once the pre-walk program is over, there is generally a ribbon cutting that formally signals the start of a walk. Anything that makes the start more exciting (a balloon arch at the start/end point, a ribbon cutting, a countdown by the crowd, air horns, photographers/videographers, marching bands, or cheerleaders) is generally good to have.

IV. Volunteer Information Meeting

What is the Purpose of the Meeting?

- To recruit a core group of volunteers who will support the walk by organizing a team for it. These volunteers will form the foundation for the success of your walk. Therefore, in many respects this meeting is one of the most important activities that you will have prior to the walk.
- While the meeting is really a volunteer recruitment meeting, you should market it as an informational meeting so as not to scare people away from attending.

How to Plan for the Meeting

- Target and recruit a walk team chair who is going to lead by example through teambuilding efforts—be sure to use the team chair position description when recruiting.
- It is recommended that this 90-minute meeting be held in the early evening from either 6:30–8:00 p.m. or 7:00–8:30 p.m.
- Provide complimentary light refreshments as an incentive for people to attend the meeting.
- Compile a mailing list of approximately 100 to 300 people that you feel are your best supporters or the most likely to support a walk for mental health awareness. This list should include:
 - Your core volunteers (people that have a history of supporting your activities and events or similar types of events).
 - Small service groups in the community that are your natural partners.
 - Physicians, service providers, and others who have a vested interest in supporting this cause.
 - Consumers, consumer organizations, and family groups you think it appropriate to invite.
 - Anyone else that you think might get involved or just want to be made aware of the plans for the walk.
- Send out a letter of invitation approximately 3–3.5 weeks prior to the date of the meeting. The letter should be sent from the walk team chair.
- Make as many followup calls as possible to the people on the invitation list.

Sample—Volunteer Meeting Agenda

6:15–6:30	Key volunteers and staff arrive and make sure room is properly set-up and audio visual equipment is working.
6:45–7:05	Guests arrive, mingle, and have some light refreshments.
7:05–7:10	Top local leader welcomes everyone and briefly discusses purpose of meeting and general plans for walk before introducing walk team chair.
7:10–7:15	Walk team chair discusses his/her reasons for supporting this walk and taking a leadership role.
7:15–7:45	<p>Key volunteer leader is introduced to talk about the walk program, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ How other non-profit voluntary organizations use walkathons to successfully raise large amounts of money and increase public awareness of their missions.▪ How walks work in general and how this walk will work specifically.▪ Sponsorship and general information on the walk.
7:45–8:00	Key volunteer leader and walk team chair join in answering questions and offering their comments on plans for the walk.
8:05–8:10	Key volunteer leader and walk team chair end meeting by thanking everyone and asking them to complete and turn in a volunteer interest form (that will be in the general information folder) before leaving.
8:10–8:30	Key volunteer leader, walk team chair, and other volunteer leaders are available to answer any specific questions guests might have about your organization and the walk program.

Sample—Thank You Letter, Initial Walk Meeting

<<Put on walkathon letterhead>>

<<Insert Date>>

Name
Address
City, State Zip

Dear _____:

Thank you for joining us at our first <<Insert Name of Organization>> walkathon volunteer informational meeting on <<insert meeting date>>. We are extremely excited about being a part of this national program and know that with the support of friends like you our inaugural walk in <<insert location of walk here>> next <<insert walk date>> will be a great success.

You will be receiving additional information about our plans for the walk over the coming months. In the meantime, you can help us support the walk in any of the following ways:

1. **By serving as a walkathon team captain and organizing a family-, organization-, or business-based team of walkers.** All the information that you need to organize a team is in the general information walk folder that you received at the meeting. Now is the time to think about your team goals (number of walkers) and who you would like to have on your team (family members, close friends, co-workers). Please contact <<Insert name of the person in charge of walk>> if you have any questions about how to organize a team for the walk. When it comes time to build your walk team, all the help you need to do so will be provided!
2. **By recruiting a corporate sponsor for the walk.** You can use the sponsorship folder that you received at the meeting to help recruit sponsors for the walk. Any family member, organization, or business can be a sponsor of the walkathon. Sponsorship donation levels start at <<insert dollar amount>> (for a kilometer route sign) and go up to <<insert dollar amount>> (for presenting sponsor of the entire walk). Again, please let <<insert name of the person in charge of the walk>> know if you need any help in approaching a sponsor prospect. He/she can send you what you need to make the approach or can prepare and mail out the sponsorship package for you.
3. **By recruiting other families or organizations to join you in supporting the walk.** Those of us already involved with the walk will be the ones who recruit most of the consumers, families, agencies, and businesses to support the walkathon. Again, if you know of anyone who might like to get involved, be sure to speak with him or her about it and give him/her a general walk information folder. Add any potential volunteers that you recruit to our walkathon database.
4. **By securing donations or volunteers for the day of the walk.** We will need all types of donations (food and refreshments, entertainment, tables and chairs)

and volunteers to help on the day of the walk. We will continue to update you about our donation and volunteer needs. In the meantime, please contact <<insert name of the person in charge of the walk>> if you are interested in working on the logistics of the walk.

If you have any questions about the walkathon, please contact me at <<insert phone number>>. Also, please remember that we can provide you with any materials (sponsor folders, walk letterhead and envelopes, general information folders) that you need to help recruit other supporters or sponsors for the walk. Basically, we'll get you whatever you need, whenever you need it, from now up until the day of the walk.

Thank you again for taking the time to learn more about our plans for this exciting new awareness/stigma-busting program. I know that we have the plan, the people, and, most of all, the enthusiasm needed to make this event a great success both in terms of increasing public awareness of mental health and changing attitudes about people living with mental illnesses here in <<insert community>>.

Sincerely,

Name

Walk Team Chair

Cc: Name of person in charge of walk

V. Walk Sponsorship

Who Should Be a Sponsor?

- Develop a target list of 25 to 100 local companies and organizations that you believe might be interested in or easily capable of sponsoring the walk. This list should include:
 - Natural partners and allies of your group (pharmaceutical companies, HMOs, hospitals, health and human services organizations, medical group practices, and companies that have sponsored your other fundraising activities).
 - Companies and organizations that you do business with or support in some way, including your bank, landlord, accountants, and major vendors.
 - Major employers in the region that you have a relationship with or that might sponsor the walk as good corporate citizens.
 - Companies that other volunteers might be able to bring to recruit.
- Keep the list relatively short (in the 25–100 range) since followup phone calls and meetings will be critical and time consuming. It is better (and less expensive) to keep the number manageable than it is to flood the market with hundreds of proposal letters. Quality proposals and quality followup efforts are what we recommend.
- Try to turn your walk volunteers into sponsorship solicitors whenever possible. One of the truisms of volunteerism and fundraising is that people respond to people—which means that who your volunteers know may be more important than the cause in terms of getting volunteers and donations.
- Let your supporters know from the beginning that people and companies they know might sponsor the walkathon. Give the volunteers the tools (sponsorship packets, sample letters, and letterhead and envelopes) that they will need to become a successful sponsor recruiter.
- Sponsors generally come from:
 - The volunteer's employer (or another family member's employer).
 - A business associate of the volunteer.
 - The employer of a close friend of the volunteer.
- Not all volunteers will have access to corporate support. However, it is appropriate for people who are employed and do have a network of family and friends to recruit a company or organization they know to sponsor the walk.

How Should I Start?

- Draw up a top prospect list of 5 to 10 companies or organizations that you feel are your best prospects for sponsoring the walk. Hopefully one or two of these companies will be an easy “yes” and you will be able to report to others that you have been successful in recruiting sponsors for the walk.
- Start with your best prospects first.

Creating a Sponsorship Request Folder

- Attaining sponsorships is a key part of your fundraising efforts. A sponsorship request folder should include the following:
 - A formal sponsorship request letter (see example).
 - A walkathon folder with the following:
 - Three to five pieces of literature on the sponsoring organization and mental health issues.
 - One-page case statement about the sponsoring organization and why the walk is being held.
 - Fact sheet on mental illness, its prevalence, and the hope of recovery.
 - Sponsorship confirmation form.
 - Two-page sponsorship opportunities document.

The goal is to provide the potential sponsor with as much information as possible about the sponsoring organization and the objective of the walkathon.

What About Other Sponsors?

- People who donate cash, goods or services, or support the walk in other ways should be recognized as sponsors of the walk based on the assigned value of their donation or support. For example, if a water company agrees to donate 2,000 16-ounce bottles of water with a retail value of \$1,000, you should recognize the company at the appropriate sponsor-level for your walk.
- Strong media supporters (TV, radio, newspapers) can be recognized as media sponsors of the walk.
- Human services agencies that agree to support the event early in the process and plan to have a team in it or provide other volunteer support can be given recognition based on a mutually agreed value of that support (assigning value to volunteer support can be a little tricky, but generally you know who you want or need to recognize as sponsors of your walk.)

Sample—Sponsorship Confirmation Form

<<This form should be printed on walk letterhead.>>

Yes, we are proud to support the inaugural <<Insert city or town location of walk>> walkathon. We authorize the <<Insert Sponsoring Organization's Name>> to include our name or logo on all the materials printed for the event consistent with our sponsorship selection below. <<Sample dollar amounts provided>>

_____ Presenting Sponsor	\$10,000
_____ Major Sponsor	\$5,000
_____ Gold Sponsor	\$2,500
_____ Kickoff Luncheon Sponsor	\$1,000
_____ Silver Sponsor	\$500
_____ Bronze Sponsor	\$250
_____ Kilometer Sponsor	\$100

Name: _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-Mail: _____

_____ Our check is enclosed.

_____ Please invoice me.

To insure that your company logo is included on the walker sponsor brochures and posters, please return this form to the following address by <<Insert date>>. Once this form is received, someone will contact you regarding the artwork for the walk materials.

Sponsoring
Organization: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone #: _____ Fax: #: _____ E-Mail: _____

Sample—Sponsorship Opportunities Sheet

Presenting Sponsor—\$2,000

- Sponsor listed as presenting sponsor of the walk on the front cover of all walker sponsor brochures and on event posters.
- Sponsor's name and logo printed prominently on the top back of the walk T-shirts.
- Sponsor's name mentioned prominently in all press releases produced for the event.
- Sponsor recognized prominently in pre- and post-event mailings to walkathon supporters.
- Sponsor recognized prominently at the pre-event kickoff luncheon for team captains and volunteers, including a banner display.
- Sponsor's corporate banner may be displayed prominently at the start/end point of walk.
- Sponsor may have an information booth/tent at walk and the opportunity to develop promotional campaigns tied into the event.
- Sponsor's name or logo will be prominently displayed on the walkathon Web site.

Major Sponsor—\$1,000

- Sponsor's name or logo placed on front cover of all walker brochures and event posters.
- Sponsor's name or logo highlighted on the back of walk T-shirts.
- Sponsor's name mentioned prominently in all press releases produced for the event.
- Sponsor recognized at the pre-event kickoff luncheon.
- Sponsor's corporate banner may be displayed prominently at the start/end point of walk.
- Sponsor may have an information booth/tent at walk and the opportunity to develop promotional campaigns (that do not conflict with any being run by presenting sponsor of the walk) tied into the event.
- Sponsor's name or logo will be prominently displayed on the walkathon Web site.

Gold Sponsor—\$750

- Sponsor's name and logo listed in the walker sponsor brochures and on the event posters.
- Sponsor's name and logo will be placed on event T-shirt.
- Sponsor's name will be included in an event press release.
- Sponsor recognized at the pre-event kickoff luncheon.
- Sponsor's corporate banner may be displayed at the start/end point of walk.
- Sponsor will have opportunity to have an information booth at walk.
- Sponsor's name or logo will be displayed on the walkathon Web site.

Silver Sponsor—\$500

- Sponsor's name and logo listed in the walker sponsor brochures and on the event posters.
- Sponsor's name and logo will be placed on event T-shirt.
- Sponsor recognized at the pre-event kickoff luncheon.
- Sponsor's corporate banner may be displayed at the start/end point of walk.
- Sponsor's name or logo will be displayed on walkathon Web site.

Bronze Sponsor—\$250

- Sponsor's name listed in walker sponsor brochures.
- Sponsor's name or logo printed on walk T-shirts.
- Sponsor recognized at the pre-event kickoff luncheon.
- Sponsor's name or logo will be displayed on walkathon Web site.

Kickoff Luncheon Sponsor—\$1,000

- Sponsors will be recognized prominently as the presenting sponsor of the walk kickoff luncheon, on the luncheon invitation, on the walkathon Web site, in pre-event mailings to team captains and volunteers, and at the luncheon. Sponsors also will receive the recognition given to silver sponsors as listed above.

Kilometer Sponsor—\$100

- Sponsor's name and logo will be placed on kilometer signs along the walk route.

Other Sponsorship Opportunities

- Special Sponsorship Recognition is available for major donors of goods and services, depending on the cash value of the donation. For more information on sponsorship opportunities, please call <<Name>> at <<Phone number>>.

Sample—Sponsorship Request Letter

<<Insert Date>>

Name

Title

Company/organization

Address

City, State Zip

Dear <<Insert Name>>:

I am writing to invite you to consider becoming a sponsor of the inaugural <<Insert city or town of walk>> walkathon.

The <<insert distance>> walk will be held on <<date>> at <<insert location>>. A fact sheet in the right-hand pocket of the enclosed folder provides details on our plans for the event.

The goal of the walk is to raise awareness regarding the need for America to build a world-class treatment and recovery system for people with mental illness and to publicize the hope of recovery.

These efforts are important because millions of Americans, involving an estimated one in five families, are living with mental illness. (See enclosed fact sheet in the left-hand pocket of folder.) For example, of the approximately 1 million total hospital admissions in 1998, almost 262,000 (25.8 percent) were psychiatric admissions. Even more startling is the fact that the total cost of mental health services in the United States is now estimated to be more than \$200 billion a year.

By supporting the walk, your company will receive recognition that will show your employees and members of the community that you are committed to backing the effort to improve the lives of people with mental illness. (The specific ways that our walk sponsors will be recognized are outlined in the sponsorship information materials in the right-hand pocket of the enclosed folder.)

Thank you for your kind consideration of this request for your support. We will contact you soon to answer any questions that you might have about <<Insert sponsoring organization name>> or the walkathon.

In the meantime, please feel free to contact me at <<Insert phone number>> if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

VI. Team Building

- Set goals for the number of walkers that you hope your team will gather.
- List the people that you would like to ask to walk on your team. Your top prospects should include:
 - Your spouse or significant other.
 - Consumers.
 - Your children.
 - Parents and grandparents.
 - Brothers and sisters, and brothers and sisters-in-laws.
 - Cousins.
 - Aunts and uncles.
 - Current coworkers.
 - Former coworkers.
 - Friends.
 - Neighbors.
 - Anyone else that you feel close to.
- Complete or collect a walker registration form for every walker that you recruit for your team. Register your walkers online, or mail or fax their registration forms to the walkathon office so everyone is properly registered for the walk.
- Keep your Team Roster Poster updated as you sign up your walkers, and display it in a prominent spot in your home (the refrigerator door is usually a good spot) so you and your family can see your team grow during the weeks leading up to the walk.
- Make sure all your walkers know why their participation in the walk is important to you and the millions of other individuals and families in the United States touched by mental illness in some way. Keep them as informed as possible about the progress of the team's recruitment efforts during the months and weeks leading up to the walk.
- Design and order team T-shirts for all the walkers on your team approximately 2 to 3 weeks before the day of the walk.
- Write everyone a thank you letter—include pictures from the day if you can.

- Relax and be proud of the important role you and your family and friends are playing in the fight for all those dealing with mental illness!

Walk Team Chair Targeting Worksheet

Prospect's Name: _____ Title: _____
Company: _____ # of Local Employees: _____

Reasons he/she might be "interested" and make a good walk team chair:

Possible negative factors in recruiting this person:

Prospect's Name: _____ Title: _____
Company: _____ # of Local Employees: _____

Reasons he/she might be "interested" and make a good walk team chair:

Possible negative factors in recruiting this person:

Core Team Building Strategies

Set Walker and Fundraising Goals for the Team

- Recommended team building goal: 10–20 percent of total number of employees.
- Your team goal should include family and friends as well as employees.

Recruit Team Captains and Walkers

- Start by helping the company identify or appoint an overall team captain to lead the team building effort. This person will serve as the main liaison with the walk coordinator and volunteers running the program. This person often will have a personal interest in mental health.
- Encourage (and help) this team captain to recruit assistant team captains in every department or on every floor (use the United Way model).
- Have as many team captains as possible attend the pre-walk team captains' kickoff luncheon that will be held approximately 8 weeks prior to the walk.
- Use a “top down approach” to teambuilding whenever possible. Draft a memo from the president or other top executive to all department heads asking them to appoint a team captain for their department or area and organize a meeting for these team captains.
- Send a memo from president or other top executive to all employees telling them about the walk and encouraging them to join the company team.
- Always try to make the walk personal by highlighting important facts about mental illness and its impact on society and how the cause will benefit from the company's participation in the walk.

Host Internal Team Building Meetings

- Arrange for a 10- to 15-minute presentation on the walk at a regular management staff meeting.
- Schedule a special presentation about the walk for as many employees as possible—always have a team captain or volunteer touched by mental illnesses speak at these presentations.
- Meet with team captains before or after the kickoff luncheon to help them develop a team building game plan.

- Always distribute sponsoring organization literature as part of any walkathon-related meetings you have with employees, team captains, and senior managers. Always try to sign walkers up at the conclusion of any presentation on the walk.

Provide Effective Internal Team Building Incentives

- Offer a team T-shirt (designed and paid for by the company) to every walker.
- Offer incentive prizes (selected and paid for by the company) for departments.
- Hold competitions between divisions, departments, sites, or branches of the company.
- Offer special recognition (plaques, letter of commendation in personnel file, lunch with the CEO) for top performing team captains.
- Publish a thank you list of all the walkers in the company newsletter or in a special thank memo to employees.

Recruiting and Developing Large Teams

A Checklist for Volunteers and Staff Managing a Walk

- Send team captain starter kits (folders with walker brochures, posters, and teambuilding and letter writing instructions) to all potential supporters unable to attend the kickoff.
- Compile a database of team captains for your confirmed and potential teams.
- Move people from your potential teams/team captain database to your confirmed teams/team captain database.
- Print out a master list of your confirmed teams in alphabetical order with the primary team captains listed by every team.
- Communicate regularly with your team captains about the walk by e-mail or regular mail.
- Keep close track of the number of walkers that each of your teams has registered for the walk.

What Should the Team Captains Do?

- Be the first to complete a walker registration form for their team.
- Complete and send in a team information form for their team.

- Put a walker registration form in the hands of as many of their co-workers, family members, and friends as possible. If a team captain is a business team captain, we recommend that they try to send a memo about the walk with a walker brochure to every employee in their company. The memo should come from the highest level senior manager who will agree to sign the memo. A family team captain should get a walker brochure into the hands of every family member, friend, and coworker.
- Collect walker registration forms for all of the walkers that they sign up for their team and send those forms into the walkathon office.
- Have T-shirts (preferably brightly colored) for their walkers so they stand out on the day of the walk.
- Offer incentives (such as prize drawings) to encourage people to sign up for the walk. Business team captains may have additional financial resources to offer incentive prizes to workers.
- Do everything possible to show their team walkers that their support is appreciated and to make the walk as much fun as possible. This might include things like having a pre-walk dinner or party, a team breakfast the morning of the walk, or a post-walk party or barbecue.
- Communicate regularly with both the walkathon office (to get teambuilding advice, encouragement, and support) and with their team members.
- Think about the walkers on their team after the walk and share information with them such as how many walkers participated and media coverage. This information may be sent with a card, letter, team photo taken the day of the event, or anything that clearly says to the walker that the walk was a success in helping people with mental illness.

Team members should feel appreciated, and should feel that they made a difference for others.

A walk manager's job is to help the team captains as they recruit walkers and complete as many of these tasks as possible.

Team T-Shirts Make a Team!

More than any other factor, team T-shirts help build a team prior to a walk and unite a team the day of a walk. Here are some key tips to keep in mind regarding team T-shirts:

- They should be bright and colorful so the team wearing them STANDS OUT as much as possible on the day of the walk.
- T-shirt designs, logos, and slogans should be as creative and unique as possible so they are a conversation piece both during and after the walk. Team T-shirts are (in effect) walking billboards for your company, organization, or family team.

- A great way for a company team to develop creative and unique designs for its team T-shirt is to sponsor an employee T-shirt design contest.
- Another great way is to tap the talents of the company's public relations (PR) department staff, or the family's "in-house" artist/designer.
- Good team T-shirt designs almost always include both the company or family's name and the name (sponsoring organization's name) and logo of the walk.
- Sponsor a best team T-shirt contest with the winner selected at the walk. Offer a prize to the winning team.
- Team T-shirts are a very effective walker recruitment tool if publicized and promoted by the team captain prior to the walk. People love T-shirts, especially cool ones!
- A simple T-shirt design is better than not having a team shirt at all. Get started with a team T- shirt this year, and get good at designing it next year!

VII. Budgets

Sample—Walkathon Budget

Walk Income Expense Budget

Sample 1: Based on Projected Total Walk Income of \$10,000

Projected Income

Corporate Cash Sponsorship	\$10,000
Miscellaneous & In-kind Support	\$5,000
Total:	\$15,000

Note: Miscellaneous income is not a corporate cash sponsorship but is generated as a result of the walk. For example, a woman's organization may be contacted about participating in the walk and the group opts to donate the proceeds of an annual fashion show to the sponsoring organization rather than organize a team. Since this is this group's way of supporting the walk, this donation should be classified as miscellaneous walk income.

Estimated Expenses

<i>General Printing</i>	
5,000 walker commitment brochures @ .30 each	\$1,500
500 11" x 17" walk posters @ .50 each	\$250
250 8" x 14" "Look Who's Walking on Our Team" posters @ .50 each	\$125
<i>Local Printing of materials</i>	
Team captain walk folder materials	\$500
Walk folders	\$100
Letterhead	\$100
#10 envelopes	\$200
Miscellaneous printing costs	\$500
Subtotal:	\$3,275
<i>Kickoff Luncheon</i>	
Printing of 1,000 luncheon Invitations @ .75 each	\$750

Mailing of 1,000 pre-invitation letters @ .37 each	\$370
Mailing Costs for 1,000 invitations @ .37 each	\$370
<i>Meal Costs</i>	
(75 @ \$22 per meal including taxes and gratuity)	\$1,650
Room decorations and other miscellaneous costs (name tags, tips, etc.)	\$200
Subtotal	\$3,340
<i>General Expenses</i>	
Costs relating to the initial informational meeting (Mailing, refreshments)	\$300
Site and permit fees	\$100
Security for walk day	\$100
Entertainment	\$300
Postage for non-kickoff luncheon or awards reception related mailings	\$300
Equipment rental (tables, chairs, canopies, etc.)	\$500
Meetings and local travel	\$200
Miscellaneous costs (walk day refreshments, photography, etc.)	\$500
Subtotal	\$2,300
TOTAL OF ALL EXPENSES	\$8,915

VIII. Media Sponsorship

Why Get Media Sponsors?

One of the main objectives of the walkathon is to increase the general public's awareness of mental health. Getting media coverage of the walk is important in achieving this goal.

Official Media Sponsorship vs. "Playing the field"

When building your public relations plan, we recommend that you first decide whether or not you want to recruit specific media sponsors (an official radio station, TV station, and newspaper sponsor) or "play the field" by not committing to specific media sponsors, therefore getting coverage by more than one station. There are pros and cons to both approaches.

Pros for having an official media sponsor:

- Official media sponsors usually give a walk much greater coverage than they do an event that they are not associated with in any way.
- Official media sponsors often will assist with the writing and production (i.e., filming and recording) or design (for a newspaper ad) of a public service announcement (PSA) for the walk. The dollar value of this in-kind service is substantial. If you want to produce your own PSA with your own celebrity walk chair and you don't have a media sponsor who will provide this service, you will have to find a PR firm or video production company to provide these services at no charge or at a significantly reduced charge. Finding a PR firm or video production company to provide these services can be difficult.
- A limited number of media sponsors saves you the cost (in time and in money) of duplicating and distributing to the local media any PSAs that you might produce for the walk.
- Media sponsors often provide you an on-air personality who will appear in the PSA if you don't have a celebrity chair who is ready and willing to film or record the PSA.
- Once the PSA is produced, the main media sponsors usually are willing to run it on air or in their newspaper fairly often for approximately 2 to 4 weeks before the walk.
- Media sponsors of the walk also are more likely to do news and human interest stories on mental health around the time of the walk to help increase the general public's awareness of the importance of mental health.
- It is generally much easier to build a strong personal and professional relationship with a contact at one media sponsor than it is to develop and maintain relationships with many media outlets.
- Media sponsors often sponsor an employee team to participate in the walk.

- Media sponsors sometimes make cash donations in addition to the in-kind support (promoting and running PSAs) that they may provide the walk.

Cons for having an official media sponsor:

- Other media outlets are unlikely to cover a walk as a newsworthy event if one of their competitors is an official sponsor.
- Official media sponsors may not reach the full viewing/listening or reading public as would having PSAs on multiple TV or radio stations or in multiple newspapers.
- Once you have an official media sponsor, you are “locked in” even if the outlet turns out to be less committed to promoting the event than the way you thought they agreed to.

If you decide to have an official media sponsor, how should you target and recruit one?

- Look for connections or relationships that you or your volunteers may have with local media outlets. Whether it is with managers at a local station or newspaper with an on-air personality, use those connections to get your foot in the door.
- Have a face-to-face meeting with your connection. If that isn’t possible, use both the phone and the mail. Submit a proposal and followup with a phone call (or vice versa, but be sure to do both).
- Provide a walk information folder with information on the sponsoring organization and mental health in one pocket and information on the walk and media sponsorship in another.

What should you ask your media sponsor to do?

- Help you produce (write, film, or record) a PSA for the walk.
- Provide you a celebrity to serve as a walk chair and star in the PSA (if you need one). If you do need a celebrity chair, you should ask that they:
 - Agree to appear in or record the PSA or be interviewed by the newspaper that is sponsoring the walk.
 - Agree to appear and speak at as many of the following walk events as his/her schedule permits:
 - Initial volunteer meeting.
 - Walk kickoff luncheon.
 - The walk itself.

- Allow his/her photo to be included in the walker sponsor brochure.
- Agree to be interviewed about his/her support of the walk.
- Consider signing a limited number of walk-related letters that would be sent out to confirmed or potential supporters of the walk (always clear any letter in advance with the celebrity chair prior to sending it).
- Agree to run the PSA as often as possible as far in advance of the walk as possible.
- Make a cash sponsorship donation to the walk.
- Sponsor an employee team in the walk.
- Cover the walk and the walk kickoff as news events.

What would the sponsor be getting in return?

- It depends on the level of support they provide, but generally, if a sponsor agreed to provide most of the support mentioned above they might receive the same recognition that a major or presenting sponsor of the walk receives. A sponsor who helps produce a PSA and agrees to run it a significant number of times during the weeks leading up to the walk should be recognized at the major or presenting sponsor level.
- If you enlist a media sponsor, send a letter to review and confirm the agreement.

In summary—

- Reducing stigma by increasing public awareness is the main goal of the walkathon.
- Start your PR efforts by deciding whether to have a select media sponsor for your walk or to promote the walk on all the media outlets in your market.
- If you decide to recruit a limited number of media sponsors from among TV, radio, and newspapers in your market, start by looking for any relationships or connections that may help you “get in the door” with your media prospects.
- Always try to have a face-to-face meeting with the person you have the relationship with. If you can’t get the meeting, send a letter with a media sponsorship folder and then followup with a phone call.
- Be as specific as possible in what you ask for and outline the recognition that the media sponsor will receive in return for their support.
- Always confirm what was agreed upon in writing.

IX. Team Captains' Kickoff Luncheon

- Plan to host the kickoff luncheon approximately 8 weeks prior to the walk date.

Things To Do for the Kickoff Luncheon

- Build a large mailing list of potential supporters to invite to the luncheon.
- Order invitations at least 6 weeks prior to the date of the event.
- Mail formal invitations within 1 week of the initial letter of invitation, or approximately 3.5–4 weeks prior to the event.
- Maintain a luncheon RSVP tracking report to keep track of responses.
- Prior to the luncheon, walk coordinators should know the total number of potential teams that have responded for the luncheon as well as the total number of people who will be representing each of those teams.
- Place printing orders for walker registration brochures, posters, and all other promotional materials approximately 3 to 4 weeks prior to the date of the luncheon. NEVER HOLD A KICKOFF WITHOUT HAVING TEAM CAPTAIN FOLDERS, WALKER BROCHURES, AND EVENT POSTERS TO DISTRIBUTE TO THE GUESTS.
- Keep a good record of those people who respond that they can't make the luncheon but indicate that they want to receive more information about the walk in the mail.
- Make as many followup calls as possible to your best potential supporters. This includes:
 - Members of your board of directors.
 - Walk committee members.
 - All confirmed supporters.
 - All persons involved with your organization.
- Send a pre-kickoff luncheon e-mail to the confirmed and potential supporters reminding them how important the luncheon is to the success of the walk. Encourage them to bring as many guests as possible to the event.
- Assemble your team captains' folders for the luncheon at least 1 week before the kickoff.
- Mail the folders to supporters who cannot attend the luncheon.

- Either just before or just after the kickoff, send a team building starter kit to everyone who requests information but cannot attend the luncheon. The kits should include:
 - Team captain folder.
 - 5–10 walker registration brochures.
 - A walk poster.
 - A “Look who’s walking on our team” poster.
 - A personalized cover letter.
- If possible, make a followup call to discuss the walk.
- Prepare an agenda for the luncheon using the sample provided.
 - Update your walk supporters e-mail and mailing list with the names of all the new supporters you get from the kickoff luncheon and begin sending them regular event update reports (via e-mail and regular mail) between the time of the kickoff and the day of the walk.
 - The business team chair should mail a special business invitation to their target audience approximately 4.5–5 weeks before the actual date of the luncheon, and the formal invitation should be mailed approximately 1 week later.
 - The target audience for the business invitation includes top level business leaders in your community.

After the Kickoff Luncheon

Send a “Sorry you couldn’t join us at the kickoff luncheon” letter.

- Include a walk folder from the kickoff luncheon and all materials (5 sponsor brochures, posters, etc.) in the order they are referred to in the letter. For example, place the team information form in the front, right pocket of the folder. This will make it easy to refer to for the person getting the folder.
- Whenever possible and appropriate, use the name of your walk general chair (or volunteer walk coordinator).
- Send the letter to anyone who has expressed an interest in the walk but who was not at the kickoff luncheon.
- Send the letter to anyone you think should have been at the luncheon, but wasn’t there and has not committed to supporting the event.

- This may include board members, volunteers, mental health agencies, or organizations or professionals who you think really should be involved with the walk but haven't responded yet.
- Often times these people/organizations do not realize how important and well-organized the event is until they actually see the materials that you have put together. Don't assume that because they haven't responded to a sponsorship request proposal or an invitation to the kickoff luncheon that they will not support the walk.
- Your goal is to make these people/organizations realize that they NEED to support the walk because of the nature of their business or because of their relationship with mental health issues. Your materials and success to date are the most effective tools to recruit new teams and supporters for the walk.
- Followup is crucial; make a followup call to everyone you send a folder to. This will significantly increase the positive response rate you will get for this mailing.

Send a "Thanks for coming to the walk kickoff luncheon" letter to everyone who attended the event.

- The purpose of the letter is to keep the walk at the top of everyone's consciousness and to succinctly review what it is you are asking them to do as team captains.
- Include a team information form with this letter just in case they didn't submit it at the luncheon they forget to complete it and send it in after the luncheon.
- Include the walk materials order form for people to reorder materials. It is not uncommon for team captains to run out of materials between the time of the kickoff and the day of the walk.
- Continue to communicate with your team captains and supporters over the weeks through letter should be the first in what should be a continuing series of written, verbal, and face-to-face communications.
- Make sure that you have a comprehensive database (name, mailing address, e-mail address, team name, phone and fax numbers, and team goals) of all of your team captains. This will enable you to mail "progress reports" on the status of the event to everyone between the time of the kickoff and the day of the walk.
- Develop a broadcast e-mail for all of your team captains and walk supporters (for those you e-mail addresses of) so that you can communicate with them quickly and efficiently about the walk.
- Speak with each of your team captains by phone within 2–3 weeks of the kickoff luncheon. Confirm their support or delete them from your lists if they inform you that they will not be participating this year. The main goal is to try to get to "know" your teams and team captains through these calls.

- Develop a mailing (e-mail or regular) schedule for the walk update reports that you plan to send during the weeks leading up to the walk. These reports should be sent from your general walk chair, family team chair, or another well-respected volunteer. Walk update reports usually include the information listed below to keep everyone informed, involved, and motivated about the walk:
 - Share stories about the good things team are doing for the walk. Focus on the success that your team captains and supporters are experiencing with teambuilding efforts.
 - Highlight things that you WANT teams and team captains to do (order team T-shirts, collect and send in walker registration cards, ensure their walkers know what team they are on, gather more walkers.)
 - Recognize cash sponsors and donors of goods and services.
 - Review walk day registration procedures and day of logistics info (entertainment, food, parking, etc.).
 - Develop a master list of teams and update the number of registered walkers for each team as the registrations are received. Include this list with the progress reports that you send the team captains in a format such as this:

Date of Report:

Team	Team Captain	Number of Registered Walkers
------	--------------	------------------------------

- Do as many walk-related presentations as possible to potential supporters during the weeks leading up to the walk.

Planning Checklist

- Build a mailing list of potential supporters to invite to the luncheon.
- Order invitations for luncheon at least 6 weeks prior to date of the event.
- Mail formal invitations within 1 week of the initial letter of invitation, or approximately 3.5–4 weeks prior to the event.
- Maintain a luncheon RSVP tracking report to keep track of responses. The two key numbers any staff person responsible for coordinating a walk should always know prior to a kickoff are the total number of potential teams that are attending the luncheon and the total number of people who will be representing each of those teams.

- Place printing orders for walker registration brochures, posters, and all other promotional materials approximately 3–4 weeks prior to the date of the kickoff. NEVER HOLD A KICKOFF WITHOUT HAVING TEAM CAPTAIN FOLDERS, WALKER BROCHURES AND EVENT POSTERS THERE TO DISTRIBUTE TO THE GUESTS.
- Keep a good record of those people who cannot attend the luncheon but want to receive more information about the walk.
- Make as many followup calls as possible to your best potential supporters. This includes members of your board of directors, walk committee members, and all confirmed supporters.
- Send a pre-kickoff luncheon e-mail to all your confirmed and potential supporters reminding them how important the luncheon is to the success of the walk. Encourage them to attend and to bring as many guests as possible to the event.
- Assemble your team captain folders for the luncheon (and to mail to supporters who can't attend the luncheon) at least 1 week before the date of the kickoff.
- Just before or just after the kickoff, send a team building starter kit (team captain folder, 5–10 walker registration brochures, a walk poster, and a “Look Who’s Walking on Our Team” poster) to everyone who can’t attend the luncheon but wants walk information. Include a personalized cover letter and, if possible, make a followup call to discuss the walk.
- Prepare an agenda for the luncheon.
- Update your walk supporters’ e-mail and mailing lists with the names you get from the kickoff luncheon and begin sending them regular event update reports (via e-mail and regular mail) between the time of the kickoff and the day of the walk.

Sample—"Thanks for Coming" Letter

<<Insert Date>>

Name
Address
City, State Zip

Dear <<Insert Name>>:

Thank you for attending our inaugural <<Insert sponsoring organization's name>> kickoff luncheon on <<insert date>>. As you could see, we had a great turnout and people are clearly excited. We have no doubt that with the support of friends like you, the walk will be a great awareness-raising success!

We want you to know that we (the walk coordinator and the walk planning committee) are available to answer any questions and to provide you whatever support you may need to organize your team. We will send our supporters and team captains regular progress reports on the walk over the coming weeks. We would love to include any good teambuilding success stories or ideas that you may have in these reports. Please share your good news, ideas, and recommendations with us so we can in turn share them with everyone else!

If you are a team captain (or helping a team captain) here's a summary of what we are asking you to do:

- Select a name for your team and complete and return a Team Information Form for your team. If you did not complete and turn in a Team Information Form at the kickoff, another copy is enclosed.
- Be the first walker to sign up for your team by completing the walker registration form in your walker commitment brochure.
- Collect registration forms from all your walkers and send them into the walkathon office on a regular basis. Use the "Look Who's Walking on Our Team" poster to keep track of all your walkers.
- Design and order team T-shirts for your walkers. (Remember we can help you with this. Just call us!)

For the past 20 years, dozens of non-profits have used walkathons to recruit countless volunteers and raise tremendous amounts of public awareness for their causes. Now it's our turn! Together, we can make our walkathon as successful as any of those other walk programs. Together, we can make a real difference in the fight for those with mental illness. Together we are STRONG and will be HEARD!

Sincerely,

Name
Title

Sample—“Sorry You Couldn’t Attend” Letter

<<Insert Date>>

Name
Address
City, State Zip

Dear <<Insert Name>>:

We are sorry that you were not able to join us at the kickoff luncheon for the inaugural <<Insert name of sponsoring organization>> walkathon on <<Insert luncheon date>>. We had a great event with more than <<Insert number>> people in attendance, but your presence was definitely missed!

Enclosed you will find a folder containing the walkathon material that we reviewed at the luncheon. It is our hope that you will consider supporting the walk by using the material in this folder to organize a team of family members, friends, and business associates. The <<insert distance>> walk will be held on <<insert date>> at <<insert location>>. If you are interested in organizing a team for the walk, or would just like more information, please complete and return the team information form that is in the front of the right-hand pocket of this folder.

In addition to the team information form, you will find the following materials in this folder:

- Information on our organization and mental health issues
- Five walker sponsor brochures that you and the walkers that you recruit for your team can use to sign up for the walk
- A packet of information on how to organize a community or business-based team to take part in the walk
- A packet of information on how a company can become a corporate sponsor of the walk
- A “Look Who’s Walking on Our Team!” poster that you can use to keep track of your walkers
- An 11” x 17” walk poster

Please consider this folder your “starter kit” for the walk and don’t hesitate to contact (name of person in charge of walk) at the walkathon office (phone number) if you have any questions about the walk or need more materials.

The response we have received for the walk has been truly fantastic and all indications are that it is going to be a great success at increasing public awareness of mental health. We sincerely hope that you can be a part of this historic event.

Best wishes,

Name
Title

Sample—Kickoff Luncheon Invitation

<<Insert Date>>

Name

Title

Company

Address

City, State Zip

Dear <<Insert Name>>:

I am writing to invite you to join me and my colleagues at <<insert name of business team chair's company>> in supporting the inaugural <<insert area of walk and sponsoring organization's name>> walkathon. The <<insert distance>> walk will be held on <<insert day and date>> at <<insert location>>.

Here are three good reasons why I think you should join me in getting your company and employees involved with this walkathon:

Mental illness is one of America's most serious public health problems. Mental illness costs employers tens of billions of dollars annually in lost employee productivity and health care expenses.

Participating in the walkathon is easy and fun. All you have to do is appoint someone to serve as your team captain and we'll supply all the direction, support, and materials needed to organize a team of employees to take part in the walk.

Participating in the walk is good employee and community relations. It shows your employees and the general public that you are concerned about health issues that affect our community. Participation in the walk is also a great way to develop a sense of team spirit and camaraderie among your employees.

Here's how you can get involved with the walk—you, or any representatives that you designate, can join me and our friends and supporters at a special team captains' kickoff luncheon on <<insert day and date of kickoff>> at <<insert location of kickoff>> from <<insert time>>. This luncheon is free for all our guests <<acknowledge kickoff luncheon sponsor here if you have one>>, and we will provide all our supporters with the instructions and materials that they will need to organize a walk team.

You will receive a formal invitation to this kickoff luncheon in about 1 week. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding this letter. I hope to see you or your designated representatives at the <<insert kickoff luncheon site>> on <<insert date>>!

Sincerely,

Name

Walk Team Chair

X. Walk Day

Planning the Day of the Walk

Drawing a Map

- Meet with the person in charge of the park where the walk is being held before drawing the map or have him/her review the map after it is drawn.
- On the map, mark the following locations—
 - The start/end area.
 - Parking areas.
 - How the walkers will flow from the parking area to the staging area.
 - The walker check-in table.
 - The stage or sound system.
 - The walker T-shirt table.
 - The food and refreshment tables.
 - The portable toilets or restrooms.
 - Anything else that you plan to have at the walk.

Starting the Walk

- Plan to have all of your walkers start together instead of starting as they check in. A single mass start increases the excitement and feeling of togetherness and makes the walk appear more organized and visually impressive.
- You may want to start the event with a short (5- to 15-minute) program of speakers that might include political leaders, the walk chair, and one or two key local figures important to the walk and the sponsoring organization's mission.
- Provide any special instructions about the walk route, if needed.
- The speakers usually thank the walkers and the event sponsors, and generally try to get everyone excited about the day.
- A brief (3- to 5-minutes) warm-up program before the start of the walk led by an exercise instructor is common. The warm-up will get people loose, excited, and gathered around the walk start area, listening to the speakers over the sound system.

- Often, a ribbon-cutting formally starts the walk. Any number of different people can do this. For example, the ribbon can be cut by the general walk chair and honorary chair, a celebrity chair, a high-ranking elected official, or a person or family who is special and important to the sponsoring organization. We recommend that you use the person who is most appropriate for your walk. The cutting of the ribbon also makes a good photo opportunity and signals the formal start of the walk. The walkers often pass under a large balloon arch after the ribbon cutting.
- Lead the walkers in a 10...9...8... countdown to the start of the walk (and the ribbon cutting) to officially start the walk. A staff person or enthusiastic volunteer can get everyone going in the countdown.
- Noise always adds to the excitement of the start of the walk. Marching school bands, bagpipers, air horns, and starter's pistols are all things that way be used to help create excitement about the start of the walk.
- Music (especially walk-related songs) can be played by the DJ over the sound system during the period directly leading up to the start of the walk (for example, the theme to *Rocky*).

Walk Checklist

- **Portable Toilets:** Order portable toilets for the start/end area, if they are needed. Be sure to place them in an area that is off to the side of the main area so they aren't too prominent. The park manager may have specific recommendations about the number of portable toilets needed for an event based on the number of people attending. If not, we recommend that you have at least 1 handicapped and 1 non-handicapped portable toilet for every 500 walkers expected.
- **Entertainment:** Confirm and re-confirm (especially with your DJ or radio station contacts) the arrival time with any entertainers that you plan to have for the walk. A warning: Entertainers, especially those donating their services, have a tendency to be a tad undependable.

Good walk day entertainers include DJ's, clowns, face painters, magicians, musicians, balloon artists, etc.

- **Handling Dignitaries/Celebrities:** If you have any dignitaries/celebrities (elected officials, TV personalities) scheduled to attend, be prepared for them and let them know what it is you expect them to do or say. It is usually best to send these individuals a letter a week or two before the walk that reviews when they should arrive at the site, where they should go, who they should ask for, and what exactly you want them to do.
- **Volunteers are needed for a number of tasks—**
 - To direct people to the parking area (if needed).

- To pick up and deliver the tables, chairs, food, and refreshments, ice, and anything else to the walk site the morning of the walk.
 - To help set up the start/end area. We recommend that you have the start/end area set up at least 90 minutes before the start of the walk, or 30 minutes before walker check-in. Most sites should plan on allocating 90 minutes to 2.5 hours to set up the walk site depending on the size of the walk. This means that if check-in for your walk starts at 9 a.m. and you want your start/end ready at 8:30, volunteers should start to set up the site by 6 or 7.
 - To mark the walk route with directional signs so the walkers can follow it easily (for some walks, this may not even be necessary, for others it may be a must).
 - To set up and replenish the food and refreshment area. The area should be set up as a self-service area so that once the drinks and snacks are out, one or two people can keep everything replenished during the morning/day.
 - To set up a mid-point refreshment area with light refreshments, if you are having one.
 - To run the walker check-in tables. We recommend that you have 3 to 4 volunteers for every 100 sponsored walkers that you anticipate at your walk. If you expect 500 walkers, plan to have about 20–25 volunteers at the check-in table.
 - To give out the walk T-Shirts. You will need 1 or 2 volunteers to give out T-shirts. You should have a separate table/area where you give out your event T-shirts rather than giving them out at the check-in table. This will expedite both the walker check-in and the shirt distribution process.
- **Signs:** The number and quality of the signs for the day of the walk will vary greatly from walk to walk. Some walks will have simple handmade signs and others will have professionally made signs and banners. Signs may be made for:
 - Walk signs for the park entrance. Balloons may be tied to these signs to help draw attention to them.
 - Walker check-in.
 - Walk route directions.
 - Kilometer sponsors.
 - Sponsoring organization banners.
 - Walk sponsor banners.
 - Walk sponsor thank you.

- Refreshments area.
- T-shirt table.
- **Balloons:** Balloon arches for the start are always a great touch but can be expensive. Most balloon arches are 30 to 40 feet long. If you can get one donated or at what you think is a good price considering your budget, we recommend that you get one. They add color to the walk and make it clear to the walkers where the walk starts and ends. If you don't have money in your budget for the arch, and cannot get one donated or paid for by a supporter, don't worry about it.
 - Balloons are always a great touch to any walk. They add color to the walk, and children love to carry them. If you plan to have balloons, you'll need volunteers to start blowing them up at least two hours before the start of the walk. Remember that you will need helium to fill balloons onsite.
 - If you plan to have balloons, make sure that having helium-filled balloons is allowed by the park. Many do not allow them for environmental reasons.
- **Sound system:** Sound, especially music, creates a fun, festive atmosphere at any walk. Whether you have a volunteer handling your sound system the day of the event or a radio station or paid DJ handling it, the sound system should be set up with music playing by the start of walker registration (1 hour before the start of the walk). It usually takes a DJ about an hour to set up sound equipment so plan on having the DJ or sound volunteer at the site at least 2 hours before the start of the walk.

Review electrical needs with your DJ in advance. If they need access to electricity, or electric extension cords, you need to know before the morning of the walk.

- **Ice:** If you expect the day to be warm, please make an extra special effort to have lots of ice available to keep drinks and water as cold as possible. Your walkers will greatly appreciate this!
- **End Point Welcome Squad:** The welcome squad is a group of volunteers responsible for cheering, thanking, and congratulating the walkers as they finish the walk. This is always a great touch to any walk. High school or grade school cheerleading squads add color, fun, and excitement to the end of a walk, but having walk committee members cheer walkers and shake their hands also works well (and both is best!). Bottom line: do whatever you can to show walkers they are appreciated at the end of the walk.
- **Kilometer Sponsor signs:** If you have kilometer sponsors, place these signs along the route before the start of the walk.
- **Tents/Canopies:** You may want to have a canopy for your local check-in area (and possibly your food area). This is entirely a local decision. Remember, the walk is a

rain or shine event and if you do not have access to shelter, a canopy can come in handy if the weather turns bad.

- It is not necessary, but having **coffee and refreshments for volunteers** working on setting up the site is a nice gesture.
- **First-Aid:** Local or municipal ambulance squads will often volunteer their services for a walkathon if asked (especially if asked by the right person, such as an elected official). School nurses and podiatrists also are good options when trying to get first-aid coverage for your walks. Most walks generate very little in the way of medical emergencies (usually a blister or two, a bee sting, and occasionally a sprained ankle or knee), but it is good to be prepared for them. If you don't have an ambulance squad covering your walk, you should definitely have the phone number of the nearest hospital or emergency squad, just in case you need it.
- **Agenda:** Prepare an agenda for the day. We recommend that everyone develop a **WRITTEN AGENDA** for the day of the walk and share it with all of your key volunteers in advance of the walk. This will greatly increase the chances of the day running smoothly.
- **Communication:** Key volunteers should be able to reach each other quickly throughout the day. This may mean providing your volunteers with walkie-talkie equipment or at least making sure that all of your volunteers have a master list of each other's cell phone numbers.
- **Clean up:** Review the clean up duties with the park official. It is always a good policy to go into the day planning on leaving the start/end area and the walk route cleaner than it was when you first arrived. This will greatly increase the chances of getting the park or site again next year. Have plenty of trash bags and volunteers ready at the end of the day.
- **Event Photographers:** The main job of event photographers is to get team pictures and to capture the day on film. Two photographers are usually better than one, three better than two, etc. The photographers can be volunteers, and you can reimburse them for the film if necessary. Digital pictures also are great and easy to send to others.
- **Videotaping your walks:** If your budgets permit, plan on videotaping your walks.
- **Overall Walk Day Manager:** This person should be the staff member or volunteer who knows the most about the planning for the day of the walk. We recommend that the overall walk day manager stay in one location, usually the walker check-in area, so that all other volunteers will know where to find him/her at any time during the walk. This manager should also be reachable by phone or walkie-talkie if other key volunteers who are not in the main start/end area need to reach him/her for any reason. The security and first-aid people should also know who the overall walk day manager is and how he/she can be reached at any time during the walk.

Registration Information

Individual walkers

- Is the walk day envelope form filled out completely and printed clearly?
- If they do not have the form, send them to the special assistance table to get one and to fill it out.
- Have they included the name of their team captain/team name on the form?
- Have they signed the waiver statement at the bottom of the page?

Team Captains

- Do they have their large team captain envelope filled out completely for their team?
If not, send them to the special assistance table to get a large team captain envelope to fill out.
- Have they clearly filled out their name, team name, address, and phone number on the outside of the large team captain envelope?

Help

- Direct people to restrooms, refreshments, pavilions, T-shirts, face painters, etc.

T-shirt distribution table

- Make sure each person requesting a T-shirt has a ticket.
- Give out one T-shirt for each ticket.
- Place tickets in the collection box provided.

Volunteer Needs

This section contains recommendations on the number of volunteers needed for different walk day tasks. It is important to realize that you already have many of these volunteers available to you through your committee members, teams—especially business- and consumer organization-based teams—and in some cases, your sponsors. For example, your committee members can help to set up the walk area and staff the check-in, special assistance, refreshment, and T-shirt tables *before* they take part in the walk. In many cases they can also get other members of their team to help them with these tasks. Business-based teams usually have access people who may not be walking but are willing to volunteer. Some of the individuals involved in your walk may belong to a service organization that can provide volunteers for your walk day.

The key is to get the word out to your volunteers and supporters about your volunteer needs. The best way to do that is to mail all your committee members and team captains about your walk day volunteer needs. The walkathon office can help to do this because they have your team captain interest forms and the lists of people who asked to be sent information about your walk. These people, along with businesses, consumer groups, and sponsors that you may have a special relationship with, should provide the bulk of your volunteers on walk day.

Check If Planned For	Volunteer Task/Activity
_____	<p>Set Up of Start/End Area and Walk Route.</p> <p>Work closely with your contact person at the park where the walk is being held when planning the set-up of your walk. He/She can help you work through any questions or issues you may have about setting up a walk site. Specifically, he/she knows what can or can't be done at the park and what others have done. We recommend that 5–15 volunteers arrive at the site 3 or more hours prior to scheduled start of the walk to set up the area. The walk area should be completely set up at least 90 minutes prior to the start of the walk. The first walkers—the “early birds”—usually arrive 15–30 minutes before the scheduled walker check-in time, or about 75–90 minutes before the start of the walk.</p>
_____	<p>Check-In Tables. Recommend ratio of 3 volunteers for every 100 anticipated walkers.</p> <p>This is the most important area of the event on walk day. Providing the walkers with a smooth check-in experience is crucial to the success of the walk.</p>
_____	<p>Check-In Special Assistance (Problem) Table. Recommend 1 volunteer for every 250–500 anticipated walkers.</p> <p>Key task is to help walkers complete a walk day check-in form for every member of their team. Area should be well-stocked with extra walk day check-in forms and pens, and there should be enough table space for walkers to complete the forms.</p>
_____	<p>T-shirt Table. Recommend 2 volunteers per 750 anticipated walkers.</p> <p>Keep the T-shirt distribution separate from the check-in table so that it doesn't slow down the walker check-in process. Generally, walkers are given a raffle ticket by the check-in table volunteers that they can use at the T-shirt table to get their T-shirt.</p>
_____	<p>Refreshment Area. Recommend 2 volunteers per 500 walkers.</p>

The main tasks these volunteers will have are to set up the area and put out the refreshments. Ideally, the refreshment area should be “self-serve,” and volunteers just keep the stock replenished as needed.

Information Tables Area.

This area is optional. If your walk is selling or giving “booth space” to groups or sponsors who will then be giving out literature or material, be aware that a volunteer should be charged with helping to set up and oversee this area.

Route Monitors.

Again, this area is optional. Some walks may need to place volunteers at key places along the route to make sure that walkers make correct turns and follow the route throughout the walk. Good signage—directional arrows prominently placed at turns and intersections along route—is another way of handling this.

Rest stop.

Again, optional. Most of the walks are 3 miles and walkers generally can cover this distance without needing a rest stop/refreshment area along the way. However, you may want to have one set up at the halfway point of the walk, which is fine. Just make sure that you have it set-up, stocked, and staffed by the start of the walk. It will only take the fastest walkers about 20–25 minutes to reach this point so you’ll need to be ready for them. Some rest stops are self-serve and others may have one to four volunteers at them. Again, this will vary from walk to walk, depending on the size of both the walk and the rest stop area.

Stage/Program Manager.

Someone should be in charge of coordinating pre-walk program of speakers and activities. This person should work with the MC—or will serve as the MC—and make sure announcements are made as needed about the walk, the program starts on time, speakers are gathered up and ready to speak, the DJ or radio station has what they need, the sound system works, extension cords are available if needed, and more.

Start/End Point Manager.

This person’s primary responsibilities include making sure things are flowing properly at all of the tables and everything is on target for the walk to start on time and as planned. This means that the pre-walk program is on schedule and that the mass start of the walk is implemented as planned.

- _____ **Event Photographer.**
Main tasks include taking general walk day pictures of volunteers, walkers, and dignitaries in action and taking group pictures of the teams. Many walkathons set up a team picture area by the stage or microphone and call teams up one by one to have a team picture taken in front of a sponsoring organization's banner. The teams, especially the ones in team T-shirts, love having their picture taken as a group.
- _____ **Videographer.**
Because of cost, it is recommended that anyone professionally videotaping the walk donate their services.
- _____ **Overall Event Manager.**
Generally this is the walk coordinator or key volunteer who will work closely with the walk chairperson. The overall event manager is responsible for seeing that all aspects of walk run smoothly—or as smoothly as possible!—on walk day.

General Checklist of Needs

- _____ Tables and chairs for check-in area—Plan for 3–4 chairs per 4' by 8' table and, ideally, for 2 check-in volunteers per hundred anticipated walkers.
- _____ Tables and chairs for special assistance area.
- _____ Tables for T-shirt area
_____ (Chairs are optional.)
- _____ Tables and chairs for information area, if having information tables
- _____ Tables and chairs for start/end point refreshment area
- _____ Table for halfway point rest stop area
- _____ Event stage (optional)
- _____ Sound system (a must!)
- _____ DJ or radio station to play music before, during, and after walk—
Generally, you can use the DJ's sound system to make announcements and for the pre-walk program. The DJ or radio station should arrive and be playing music 90 minutes before the start of the walk. It is good if the music is playing as the walkers arrive. This

creates a very festive atmosphere for the walk right from the start.

————— MC for pre- and post-walk announcements and programs.

————— Exercise instructor or exercise group to lead walkers in brief (5-minute at most) pre-walk warm-up (optional, but nice touch. Most walks have this as part of the pre-walk program).

————— Electricity and extension cords, if needed, for sound system.

————— Photographer (see above).

————— Pick-up and delivery of refreshments.

————— Pick-up and delivery of tables and chairs (see above).

————— Moon-bounce for kids (optional, but a nice touch and worth the cost if you have to pay for it).

————— Entertainment for kids (clowns, face painters, magicians, balloons, etc.)—This is a nice touch and makes the event a family friendly one. Generally, the more entertainment that you have during the walk, especially the pre-walk period, the better.

————— Refreshments—Recommend that food and drink donations be in single-serving packs. General rule is two drinks and one snack per anticipated walker. More is always better, however. Recommend that you do not provide full meals for walkers unless they are donated. Strongly advise against cooking and serving hot dogs.

————— Portable toilets—Recommend 2 per 500–750 walkers. Be sure that at least one—and maybe both, if you order two—is handicap accessible. If park officials require more, do what they require.

————— Coffee—Always great to have, especially for volunteers working on setting up site.

————— Celebrities/dignitaries—Confirm details of walk and what is expected of them in writing at least 1 week prior to the walk.

————— Kilometer sponsor signs—Signs are usually 2' x 2' and made out of a durable, reusable material. Contact local sign companies in yellow pages of phone book. Check with two or three companies. Usually by the third call, you have a good idea of which company best understands your needs, is easiest to work with, and will give you best price.

————— Tents/canopies (optional)—If the park you are using doesn't give you access to shelter if the weather is bad, you might want to have at least

one or two tents for the check-in and refreshment areas. Cost is always a factor. This is usually a local decision.

Placement of sponsors' banners (always a nice touch.)—The sponsoring organization's banner should also be prominently displayed somewhere at start/end point area.

Signage—Areas that may need signs include: check-in area, special assistance area, T-shirt area, refreshment area. Signs can be professionally made or done by volunteers.

Signage for park entrance and, if needed, along roads inside the park directing drivers to parking area.

Route direction arrows to place along walk route—These can be done by volunteers. Quantity will vary site by site. One option is to make large direction arrows and get them copied on a colored light cardboard paper stock. This should not cost more than \$20 or so. Most walks will not need more than 10 directional arrows along the route.

Balloon arch (nice touch but not necessary if you can't get it donated, or at a very good price, arches can be expensive)—Balloon bunches at either end of a ribbon stretched across a starting point can create a similar effect at a fraction of the cost. You should not feel that a balloon arch for start/end point is a must if the cost is too high.

Helium-filled balloons for kids (nice touch)—Kids love balloons and they add a lot of color to the entire walk. A party store can usually handle supplying balloons and the helium needed for them at a reasonable cost.

Another option is to buy balloons and to get helium donated from a local hospital. Remember that if you do have balloons, you will need two volunteers the day of the walk to inflate them and give them to the kids.

Clean-up crew—You should always leave a park cleaner than it was when you arrived. The volunteers who break down the site should also travel the entire route and make sure that all walk-related litter is picked up.

Miscellaneous supplies—This includes things like extra walk day check-in forms for the special assistance table, staple guns, pens, large paper clips, rubber bands, staplers, notepads, extension cords, masking tape and whatever other things you may need as you prepare for the day of the walk.

First-Aid—It is recommended that you contact the EMT squad that is

based in the city or town that the walk is being held in. The county may also be able to provide an ambulance for the walk or at least direct you to where to get one. Area hospitals may also be able to help you with this task. The local (i.e. township) volunteer ambulance squads are usually a good bet.

Pre-walk “walk through” with park officials and key volunteers—It is strongly recommended that you have a pre-walk “walk through” of the site with your primary contact at the park and a few key volunteers sometime during the week before the walk. It is far better to catch last minute problems and issues before the walk than it is to have to deal with them on walk day.

XI. Conclusion

For the past 20 years, dozens of health-related non-profits have used walkathons to raise public awareness, to recruit countless volunteers, and to generate significant revenue for their causes. Now it's your turn! You can make your walkathon as successful as any of those other walk programs. Working together and using this guide, you can help end stigma and make a real difference in the lives of people living with mental illnesses.

XII. Resources

The model used in this guide was developed over time focusing on concepts that various walkathons have successfully used. The team-based approach to conducting a walk is the core component. We suggest that you contact local walk leaders in your community who work with team-based programs, such as the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation Walkathon or the American Lung Association Asthma Walkathon. These folks have been doing walkathons for years and will be more than willing to share their knowledge about conducting a successful walkathon.

Walks are not in competition with one another since they appeal to different segments of the population based upon a person's area of interest. Thus, people interested in cancer research or curing asthma may not be the same people interested in ending the stigma associated with having a mental illness.

Reach out and contact other leaders in your community who are driven by their commitment to make a difference in the lives of persons living with various health-related concerns and glean their wisdom.

Happy walking and good luck!